



# Wisconsin E-Brief for Partnership Schools

April 2011

An e-newsletter from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
Community Learning and Partnerships Team  
to promote family-school-community partnerships for children's learning

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## *Positive Partnership Practices*

These ideas come from the Wisconsin DPI VISTA and AmeriCorps volunteers working in schools, community sites, and public libraries around the state working to strengthen student learning and family-school-community partnerships. For more great ideas, read the [VISTA newsletters](#) and the [AmeriCorps newsletters](#).

**“Hot Jobs” Board a hot item.** A popular gathering place for high school students at Milwaukee’s New School for Community Service is in front of the “Hot Jobs” board AmeriCorps volunteer Robyn Krimke has erected and updates weekly near the school’s main office. She finds and posts job applications and openings for high school students from businesses throughout Milwaukee. “The kids love it and are always looking for who’s hiring,” she said.

On the other side of the refurbished bulletin board is “Community Happenings and Resources,” featuring free or low-cost learning opportunities for students and their families. Robyn posts free admission days for the Milwaukee Zoo and museums, Jelly Belly Factory tours, community classes and dinners, and volunteer opportunities. “Even though the students, themselves, may not have an interest, many of them have young children or siblings, so these are great opportunities for them,” she said.

**ELL Parents learn English and E-mail.** VISTA member Amanda Shapiro found a way to incorporate technology learning into the adult English classes she has organized this year. Parents created individual e-mail accounts during the ELL class so they’d be able to keep in touch with their children’s teachers and better monitor children’s progress. The ELL classes include a computer component to help increase family-school communication.

**One-Stop Shop for Summer Learning.** Families in the Racine School District can learn about and register children for summer school, community recreation, and learning activities during Family Fun Day. VISTA member Jon Peters helped create a Community Partners Collaboration group, made up of local community agencies and school staff. The group produced a community catalog of summer activities, including summer school listings, for families and planned the Family Fun Day.

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## *“Beyond Random Acts” Conference Wrap-Up*

### **Parents and School Staff Offer Direction, Ideas for Schools**

Over 250 parents, educators, and community members linked arms for children’s learning March 23 in Milwaukee at the “Beyond Random Act of Partnerships: Building the Climate for School Success” Conference, sponsored by the Wisconsin DPI, PTA, WEAC, and Parents Plus.

Following, is a brief summary of key ideas participants developed in conversation sessions throughout the day. The common message to both families and school staff: **Persevere! Never stop inviting families AND suggesting ways for the school to include all families!**

Ideas for Schools to Reach More Parents	Ideas for Parents to Be Engaged in Schools
Hold listening sessions with parents: do they know where the front door is? How to get beyond it?	Interview your child's teacher about expectations; tell her/him about your child
Have a Parent Center; even a small space empowers parents	Know what your child is learning and how you can help at home; use community resources
Ask parents how best to communicate with them	Tell staff what you need to help your child
Know your school families, their challenges and strengths; build relationships!	"Each one, teach one;" reach out to another parent; learn from experienced parents
Hold technology navigation sessions for parents	Communicate frequently with teachers
Train staff every year; teachers set the tone for family engagement	Train parents how to be proactive advocates for their child and for all families

## *Learning from the Research*

### **Collegial Circles Grow Parent-Teacher Knowledge, Bonds**

Looking for an alternative to teacher-led workshops for parents as a way to strengthen your school's family engagement? One suburban district in upstate New York created a Collegial Circle for parents and teachers to read and talk together, creating a new paradigm for parent workshops. Ten parents and 10 teachers held twice-monthly sessions to read about parent involvement, explore their own beliefs, and come up with recommendations to strengthen literacy efforts with school families. As a result, home-school communications have improved, teachers receive more professional development, and homework has been re-designed to become more interactive. Learn more in the [March 2011 FINE newsletter](#) about the benefits of [Collegial Circles](#).

## *Mark Your Calendar*

**April 29-30:** Wisconsin Annual PTA Convention at the Blue Harbor Resort, Sheboygan. Keynote speakers include Ana Homayoun, author of **That Crumpled Paper Was Due Last Week**, offering innovative time-management tips for middle and high school youth. Convention agenda and registration are at <http://www.wisconsinpta.org/Convention.html>.

**May 1:** NNPS members should submit **Promising Partnership Practices** for publication in the 2011 edition. Visit <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/ppp/index.htm> for more information.

## *Partnership Resource*

### **Facilitator's Guide to Systemic Family Engagement**

New research from SEDL (formerly known as Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in Austin, Texas) shows that schools switching from random acts to a systemic approach to family engagement achieve more gains in student learning. For example, schools should consider:

Shifting from	To
An individual responsibility to support student learning	A shared responsibility throughout the local system
A deficit-based or adversarial approach to interactions	A strength-based and collaborative approach
An add-on program to support needed change	Integrated programmatic support for change
One-shot projects	Sustained efforts
Compliance-driven engagement	Shared ownership focused on continuous improvement

SEDL's new, 122-page facilitator's guide, *Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community*, features research, practices, and tools to help schools, districts, and communities meaningfully engage families in children's learning. Available free, online at <http://www.sedl.org/ws/ws-fam-comm.pdf>.

## Grant Opportunities

### BE BIG in Your Community Contest

The BE BIG Campaign invites everyone, big and small, to take action and raise awareness for how Clifford's BIG Ideas (Share, Be Kind, Help Others, Be a Good Friend, Play Fair, Have Respect, Be Truthful, Believe in Yourself, Work Together, and Be Responsible) can make the world a better place. The 3rd Annual BE BIG in Your Community Contest will award \$75,000 in community grants to the BIGGEST ideas that best demonstrate Clifford's BIG Ideas! Everyone is invited -- parents, kids, teachers or community leaders -- to submit their ideas now through June 17. Visit: [www.scholastic.com/cliffordbebig/contest](http://www.scholastic.com/cliffordbebig/contest).

### Playful City USA Program Grants

National nonprofit KaBOOM! is offering 103 play-related grants totaling \$2.1 million between 2011-13 through Playful City USA, a national recognition program honoring cities and towns that make play a priority and use innovative new programs to get children playing outdoors. Application Deadline: June 1, 2011. To apply, go to [www.kaboom.org/playfulcityusa](http://www.kaboom.org/playfulcityusa).

### Target Field Trip Grants for Schools

Every Target store will award three Target Field Trip Grants to K—12 schools nationwide—enabling one in 25 schools throughout the U.S. to send a classroom on a field trip. Each grant is valued up to \$700. Next funding cycle begins on Aug. 1, 2011. For more information, visit <http://sites.target.com/site/en/company/page.jsp?contentId=WCMP04-031880>